

ARTICLE X-A Resolution to Encourage Voting in Brookline

Submitted by: Anthony Ishak, Deborah Brown TMM-1, Bettina Neufeld TMM-1, Kate Silbaugh TMM-1, Amanda Zimmerman, Michael Zorob

To see if the Town adopts the following resolution:

WHEREAS, approximately 51% of Brookline residents rent; and

WHEREAS, approximately 18% of Brookline residents voted in the 2020 Town election and

WHEREAS, renters vote at lower rates compared with homeowners; and

WHEREAS, voter registration applications are restricted to limited locations that may be difficult to access; and

WHEREAS, renters are registered to vote at a lower percentage as compared with homeowners; and

WHEREAS, renters have a vested interest in elections and particularly local elections that impact policies applicable to them; and

WHEREAS, voting promotes inclusivity to disadvantaged populations; and

WHEREAS, Massachusetts allows eligible citizens to register to vote in person at a number of public facilities including town halls, via mail in registration form, or online if the Registry of Motor Vehicles has their signature on file; and

WHEREAS, the Election Department requires Brookline residents changing addresses or people moving into the Town from another municipality to update their registration to remain an eligible voter; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Brookline is committed to making it easier for eligible residents to vote by considering all novel means to increasing access; and

WHEREAS, a cornerstone of the Town form of government is full participation by a majority of residents; and

WHEREAS, increasing voter access is not a costly endeavor as compared to the gains associated with full enfranchisement for renters;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

1. The Town of Brookline will promote voting by providing mail-in voter registration forms at all Town buildings regularly accessed by the public (including but not limited to: Town Hall, libraries, Brookline Public Housing properties, fire stations, police stations, and schools). It will also work with the Brookline Housing Authority (BHA) to ensure that its residents have easy access to voter registration forms.
2. The Town of Brookline will promote voting by including mail-in voter registration forms with the Annual Town Census.
3. The Town of Brookline will promote voting by providing absentee ballot applications with stamped envelopes at all Town buildings regularly accessed by the public (including but not

limited to: Town Hall, libraries, fire stations, police stations, and schools). The Town Clerk will work with BHA to identify locations for absentee ballot applications with stamped envelopes.

4. The Town of Brookline will ensure that it has ample multilingual materials at all voter registration sites, including online, and at polling stations by April 2022.
5. The Town of Brookline will send non-partisan robocalls and use social media to remind voters to cast ballots on Election Day beginning in May 2022.

6. Be it further resolved that the Office of the Town Clerk, upon the appointment or election of a new Town Clerk, shall undertake responsibility for a geo-spatial study of ways to increase the registration of new eligible voters as well as improve rates of election participation and report findings and recommendations at the 2022 Annual Town Meeting.

That study will take into account the collection of voting data available to the Town; availability and distribution of voter registration materials; utilization of census mailings for the distribution of voting-related materials; the need for multi-lingual registration and voting materials; increasing citizen opportunities for ballot drop-off; and the use of social media and other communications to promote such citizen participation—and the costs associated with such improvements. The Office of the Town Clerk will also report on the need for, and cost of, a scientific study of voting registration and voting patterns in Brookline.

6. ~~The Town of Brookline will conduct a geospatial voter registration and voting patterns study to find areas where voter registration and voter turnout is low and groups are under-represented. It will produce a set of recommendations to increase voter participation among these underrepresented groups by January 31, 2022 and implement the recommendations by December 31, 2022.~~

~~Or act on anything relative thereto.~~

PETITIONER'S ARTICLE DESCRIPTION

~~The objective of this resolution is two-fold:~~

1. ~~—— To increase Brookline's registered voter rate in our Town leading to increased participation at elections of all levels. Many residents do not have easy access to application forms given technology or location barriers. In fact last year there were an insufficient number of voting registration forms for residents of Brookline Public Housing. Brookline also has a high renter rate (nearly 50%) which makes it susceptible to having residents that frequently change addresses and are less likely to register to vote or vote with the current set-up.~~

2. ~~—— To increase our local election participatory rate (recently ranging 6-26% since 2016 as per a 6/10/20 Patch article <https://patch.com/massachusetts/brookline/brookline-town-election-turnout-less-18-percent>). In 2020 with special dispensation there was an increase in voters using the mail option to vote for the general election. This could also potentially increase the voting rate for those historically under represented (such as renters who vote at a rate of ~1/3 of homeowners) by increasing access to absentee voting.~~

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Signature

Printed Name

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~~Precinct~~

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